



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA  
Chief Executive Officer

August 25, 2009

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka  
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. T. Fujioka", is written over the printed name and title.

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

## **PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN "EXPECTING MORE: A BLUEPRINT FOR RAISING THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF FOSTER AND PROBATION YOUTH"**

At its meeting on February 14, 2006, your Board approved "*Expecting More: A Blueprint for Raising the Educational Achievement of Foster and Probation Youth*," developed by the Education Coordinating Council (ECC), and instructed the ECC to report its progress in implementing the recommendations in that document to your Board every six months. The first Progress Report was delivered to your Board on August 14, 2006; this is now the seventh report.

Because of the ECC's accomplishments over the past three years and the need to further coordinate the efforts of County departments in the education area, at its meeting on March 17, 2009, your Board approved the institutionalization of the ECC within the Chief Executive Office (CEO) Service Integration Branch (SIB) effective July 1, 2009. Further, your Board approved the ECC's Strategic Plan which includes the goals the ECC will be working on from this point forward. This Strategic Plan incorporates the twelve *Expecting More* recommendations into five overarching strategies and focuses greater attention on implementation of its principles.

This move into the CEO/SIB included a staffing structure change, moving from a team of consultants to one full-time staff. With the ECC now beginning its sixth year and focusing on specific goals, and the workload and time constraints it now faces under this new structure, the ECC will start submitting its Strategic Plan update to your Board annually.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

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Some of the key achievements with respect to individual Strategic Plan strategies are:

**STRATEGY 1:** Ensure that the Dependency Education Pilot Project is successfully completed and introduced Countywide.

**Objective:** Complete implementation of the pilot project now underway in the Montebello Unified School District and the Pomona Unified School District. Glean lessons learned through its evaluation process and develop strategies for rolling out the model in all Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regional offices.

As you know, this pilot project was conceived by the First Supervisorial District, in partnership with the CEO, ECC, DCFS, and the Montebello and Pomona Unified School Districts, and launched in April 2008. As a first step, the ECC conducted data matches between these districts and DCFS which highlighted the low academic achievement of DCFS youth in these districts (Note: the average GPA for DCFS youth attending these districts was a 1.39) and identified which schools they were enrolled in. The First Supervisorial District funded three dedicated non-case-carrying DCFS social workers to provide services on-site at high school campuses within these districts, two at the Montebello Unified School District and one at the Pomona Unified School District. Currently, there are 76 participants between both districts in the pilot. Using the assessment and case plan tools created by the project's implementation team, these on-site social workers complete a comprehensive educational case history assessment for each student, develop and implement an educational case plan through an individualized multidisciplinary team, connect students to local resources, and work to resolve any educational issues that are identified. They also work closely with each student's primary social worker to coordinate management of the case.

Casey Family Programs (CFP) is conducting an evaluation of the results from this project. To facilitate this, the ECC worked with CFP-funded local contractors to compile a complete data set for all pilot students. A matched comparison group of foster youth not enrolled in the pilot was then created and shared with CFP on August 14, 2009. This data set contained information on grades, attendance and standardized test scores from the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, as well as data from individual interviews and focus groups held with a random selection of pilot students, staff and administrators. Results from this analysis will be available in October 2009.

Preliminary results calculated at the end of the school year have already shown some promising trends: 56 percent of pilot students who graduated from high school in June would not have done so if not for intervention of the pilot project, and 83 percent of graduating pilot students have enrolled in either a 2-year or 4-year college compared to the national average of 20 percent for foster youth. These results are very encouraging, exceeding initial expectations and demonstrating its value.

Given the project's promise, plans are now underway to expand the pilot to the El Monte Union High School District and Bassett, Hacienda/La Puente and El Rancho Unified School Districts, using a modified approach. Instead of utilizing non-case-carrying social workers as the leads for developing educational assessments and plans, each youth's primary social worker will now be responsible for these duties. To make this work, social worker caseloads will consist entirely of students attending a particular district and their siblings. If this approach proves to be effective, it would permit further expansion of this model countywide.

**STRATEGY 2:** Work closely with the Probation Department (Probation) to ensure that the Comprehensive Educational Reform for the Juvenile Halls and Camps is successfully institutionalized.

**Objective:** Assist Probation in implementing the 35 recommendations outlined in the Comprehensive Educational Reform Report adopted by the Board of Supervisors on October 14, 2008.

In addition to participating as a member of the Comprehensive Educational Reform Committee (CERC) which wrote and is implementing the reform report, the ECC is a member of the Camp-To-Community Transition Workgroup. This workgroup, chaired by Juvenile Court Judge Donna Groman, designed and is now piloting a protocol that will ensure a smoother transition of probation youth back into their community schools. The pilot is being conducted with youth exiting Camp Holton to Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) schools. This protocol dictates that, 90 days before a youth is to be released, Probation, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and LAUSD staff complete an assessment of the youth's educational needs to determine the most appropriate school placement. A multidisciplinary team meeting is then held with the youth to solidify a plan for enrolling the youth in school within three days of his/her release date. Once enrolled in school, LACOE transition counselors will follow-up with the youth and their family for six months, providing any additional help that is needed. The first "class" of students in this new project was released from camp Holton in July 2009. Plans are now underway to expand this pilot to Camps Onizuka and Challenger.

One of the key recommendations of the CERC report was the hiring of a Director of School Services. A job description for this position was posted in February 2009, and interviews of the top five candidates were conducted last week by the Chief Probation Officer. It is hoped that this position will be filled very shortly.

Another key recommendation of the report—the introduction of a charter school at one of the camps—is on hold, due to concerns being raised by the California Teachers

Association and the Los Angeles County Education Association. Probation and LACOE staff are currently exploring other avenues for moving forward.

An Academic Advisory Committee comprised of experts from several local universities and chaired by Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, a professor of social work at the University of Southern California, has been created to determine what outcomes should be measured to properly evaluate this effort.

The Juvenile Court has decided to lengthen camp stays to either 5 to 7 months or 7 to 9 months to allow enough time for the educational and therapeutic interventions being introduced at the camps to have a greater impact on the youth who reside there. This policy will go into effect this fall and should be very helpful in building the academic foundation camp youth need to succeed in community schools.

**STRATEGY 3:** Partner with the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care (OCC) to significantly increase the number of DCFS children under the age of six—and the children of DCFS and probation youth—who are enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs.

**Objective:** Work with the OCC, DCFS, and Probation to develop a set of procedures for enrolling DCFS children under the age of six, and the children of DCFS and probation youth, into high-quality early care and education programs.

DCFS has now committed to the goal of enrolling 4-year-olds under their care in early care and education programs. The ECC will partner with the OCC to create a plan for implementing this new commitment in the months to come. The department has begun by supporting its Santa Clarita office's effort to enroll its age-eligible young children in local Head Start programs. This is an important culture shift for DCFS, one that should improve school readiness, strengthen parenting skills, and ensure better outcomes for DCFS families.

To evaluate the impact of this approach, DCFS is launching a longitudinal study in Long Beach to measure the overall effects of early care and education programs on DCFS children. A sample of children enrolled in these programs and a comparison sample of non-enrolled children will be tracked over time to determine if one group fares better than the other, and, if so, what specific factors made the difference. These data can then drive the types of services and supports young children in the department receive in the future.

**STRATEGY 4:** Collaborate with youth development programs, County departments, school districts and cities to significantly increase the number of DCFS and probation

youth participating in after-school and summer extracurricular and enrichment programs.

**Objective:** Work with DCFS and Probation to develop a set of procedures for enrolling DCFS and probation youth in after-school and summer extracurricular and enrichment programs.

The Dependency Education Pilot Project team is now field testing ways to connect its youth to extracurricular/enrichment activities. The most significant barriers to youth participation are lack of transportation and lack of free time in youths' overloaded schedules. Progress has been made in circumventing these barriers through identifying on-campus activities that system youth can participate in immediately after-school. As a result, 51 percent of pilot youth are now participating in some type of extracurricular activity.

With the creation of 3,000 youth jobs this summer using a portion of the County's ARRA funds, the ECC will work with DCFS, Probation, and Community and Senior Services (CSS) to institute a protocol for connecting a significant portion of system youth to this jobs program.

The ECC's executive director was recently appointed to the Los Angeles City Workforce Investment Board Youth Council which is focusing on creating additional youth employment opportunities. One of its emerging goals is to provide incentives to employers for hiring system youth.

An initial resource list of free/low-cost after-school and summer enrichment activities has been compiled and incorporated onto the ECC's website at: [www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org](http://www.educationcoordinatingcouncil.org). The ECC is now working with its members to expand this list, emphasizing those programs that are open to serving system youth and that understand their unique needs.

**STRATEGY 5:** Resolve remaining barriers to allow for the sharing of educational information between County departments and school districts throughout Los Angeles County.

**Objective:** Create an electronic data transferring process for sharing educational records with Los Angeles County case managers.

ECC members and partners have developed a mechanism that will allow school districts to share education records with DCFS, the Juvenile Court, and all counsel of record that solves, once and for all, the decade-long disagreement about Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliance. This mechanism will add

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language to the minute orders generated at disposition and subsequent hearings for DCFS youth that orders a child's school district to share his/her education information with the DCFS case manager. Once the minute order language and protocol for sharing this information is finalized, a similar procedure will be created for probation youth.

The ECC presented this minute order language and protocol on August 19, 2009 to the California Child Welfare Council Data Linkage and Information Sharing Committee as our County's solution to FERPA. State officials were very encouraged by what Los Angeles County has developed and want to learn more about our model to determine whether it could be instituted statewide.

Now that the FERPA dilemma has been resolved, a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families is being drafted to clarify under what circumstances education records can be electronically shared with our Child Welfare Services/Case Management System without violating compliance with the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). Once the SACWIS problem is solved, the County will be finally able to move forward in developing an electronic data transferring process for sharing educational records of system youth.

As can be seen by all of the above, ECC members, partners and community organizations are all actively engaged in accomplishing the ECC's Strategic Plan goals and the Council looks forward to making further significant progress. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please let me know or your staff may contact Carrie Miller at (213) 974-5967 or via e-mail at [cmiller@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:cmiller@ceo.lacounty.gov).

WTF:JW  
KH:CDM

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
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Education Coordinating Council